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6. (Amended) The microorganism of Claim 1, wherein said microorganism is capable of expressing a heterologous protein.

7. (Amended) The microorganism of Claim 6, wherein said heterologous protein is selected from the group consisting of hormones, enzymes, growth factors, and cytokines.

9. (Amended) The microorganism of Claim 8 wherein said enzyme is selected from the group consisting of proteases, carbohydrases, lipases, isomerases, racemases, epimerases, tautomerases, mutases transferases, kinases and phosphatases.

13. (Amended) A method for the production of a heterologous protein in a *Bacillus* host cell comprising the steps of:

- (a) obtaining a *Bacillus* host cell comprising nucleic acid encoding said heterologous protein wherein said host cell contains a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding cysteine protease 1, wherein said at least one of the genes encoding cysteine protease 1 encodes the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2; and
- (b) growing said *Bacillus* host cell under conditions suitable for the expression of said heterologous protein.

14. (Amended) The method of Claim 13 wherein said *Bacillus* cell is selected from the group consisting of *Bacillus subtilis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. lentus*, *B. brevis*, *B. stearothermophilus*, *B. alkalophilus*, *B. amyloliquefaciens*, *B. coagulans*, *B. circulans*, *B. lautus*, and *B. thuringiensis*.

15. (Amended) The method of Claim 13 wherein said *Bacillus* host cell further comprises a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding at least one protease selected from the group consisting of apr protease, npr protease, ppr protease, wpr protease and mpr protease.

16. (Amended) A gram-positive microorganism having a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding cysteine protease CP1.

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17. (Amended) The microorganism of Claim 16, further comprising a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding at least one protease selected from the group consisting of apr protease, npr protease, epr protease, wpr protease and mpr protease.

Please add the following new Claims:

18. (New) The gram-positive microorganism of Claim 16, wherein said at least one of the genes encoding cysteine protease CP1 is set forth in SEQ ID NO:1.

19. (New) The microorganism of Claim 18, further comprising a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding at least one protease selected from the group consisting of apr protease, npr protease, epr protease, wpr protease and mpr protease.

20. (New) The method of Claim 13, wherein said *Bacillus* comprises the nucleic acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:1.

21. (New) The method of Claim 20, further comprising a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding at least one protease selected from the group consisting of apr protease, npr protease, epr protease, wpr protease and mpr protease.